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NEWS RELEASE

Minnesotans master Heavy Horse Pull's lightweight class



Jordan Hanson, 19, of Chatfield, Minn., at centre, and his Percheron team of Shorty and Pete claimed the lightweight division final of the Calgary Stampede's Heavy Horse Pull, presented by DundeeWealth, on Friday night under the Big Top. Photo credit: Calgary Stampede

Calgary -- They're lightweights, but in name only.

It's said that no class of draft horse has the grit, determination and desire like the lightweight class. And that theory was proven again Friday night during the lightweight final of the Calgary Stampede's Heavy Horse Pull, presented by DundeeWealth.

Shorty and Pete, the plucky Percherons owned by 19-year-old Jordan Hanson of Chatfield, Minn., strained and snorted their way to the Stampede's lightweight title, pulling a 10,500-pound sled 93.5 inches -- that's nearly eight feet -- through the dirt of the Big Top infield, claiming the \$3,000 top prize in the richest Heavy Horse Pull in the world.

"Lightweight is one of the better classes. They've got more heart and try," said Hanson, who's been a heavy horse teamster since

he was 11. "My team scratched and pulled as hard as any team could ever pull. You could never ask any more from them.

"The boat was really stuck, where it was sitting. Everyone was having a hard time (at 10,000 pounds)," added Hanson. "We just came on, got a perfect start. They just scooped it and pulled their hearts out."

These two-horse lightweight teams, weighing between 2,400 and 3,000 pounds, are the only draft-horse duos to consistently pull three times their own weight --- a feat that the middleweights and heavyweights can't match.

Friday night, Shorty and Pete, sponsored by Jane Grad, pulled a sled in the final round that was 3.56 times their body weight. The Cochrane-based D Team outfit of Cracker and Rex, a pair of Belgians owned by Dennis Weinberger of Cochrane, also moved the 10,500-pound sled, but managed 17 inches to finish second and pick up \$2,500.

The Fort Garry Industries Ltd. team of J.R. and Red, owned by Randy Dodge of Albany, Ore., couldn't manage 10,500, but did drag a sled of 10,000 pounds a distance of 121 inches for third place and a \$1,500 reward.

Weinberger, who won the Stampede's 2008 middleweight crown and placed second in the heavyweight category at the same show, only teamed up Cracker and Rex in March, and has been pleased with the results. Friday night marked the pair's second competition together in harness.



"They tried hard for me," said Weinberger, of the Springbank Belgians farm, who's a longtime Stampede competitor. "I'm real happy with them. How can you not be? That's probably the first time ever, here, that all the teams got as far as they did. To be ahead of most of them? I can't complain."

Drew Martin of Regina, who won the lightweight division at the Stampede last year with Jock and Riley pulling the sled, returned with the tandem of Jock and Teddy, but was the first of nine outfits eliminated, dragging a 9,500-pound sled 21 inches.

The Stampede's Heavy Horse Pull, presented by DundeeWealth, returns Saturday night with the 10-team middleweight final -- consisting of teams that weigh a combined 3,001 to 3,500 pounds -- at 7 p.m. under the Big Top.

The heavyweight final, with teams tipping the scales at 3,500 pounds and more, closes out the three-night show on Sunday at 7 p.m. under the Big Top.

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